

From: Bill Bruce [<mailto:brucewr@comcast.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2016 5:34 PM

To: 'Gary Straight'; 'Cheri Richter'; 'Cottle & Gunn'; Dave Reilly; 'David Reilly'; 'Jim Lomis'; 'T. Landreth'; 'Terry Landreth'

Cc: Becky Myers; John J. Holman; Sam Colville; Jeff Adams

Subject: RE: Mill Site Rezoning Reconsideration

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Downtown Development Authority, it was good to meet with you yesterday morning.

I sincerely hope that the DDA will reconsider its recommendation with respect to the pending mill site industrial re-zoning application. My personal opinion is that approval of this re-zoning application would be a travesty for our City, and my reasons include the following:

- The current zoning was the result of a “for real” application some years ago by a reputable, locally visible, highly respected firm, LandMar Group. That zoning does not include industrial uses. If St. Marys now approves industrial uses, it is probable that, if the pending proposal does not come to fruition, any future re-zoning application also will include industrial uses – as a practical matter, we shall have preempted a future “LandMar-type” non-industrial-use zoning application. If we do not approve the pending re-zoning application, then the existing commercial/residential zoning will remain in place, and the door will remain open for future LandMar-type non-industrial uses.
- The LandMar re-zoning included an obligation and commitment by the applicant to engage in demolition and removal of existing mill structures and remediation of some of the contamination problems, and in fact LandMar accomplished a significant portion of this demolition and remediation before its unfortunate bankruptcy during the recent recession. The current re-zoning application includes no commitment by the applicant regarding demolition and remediation.
- Those of you who have visited the mill site will have observed the virtual wilderness area east and north of the original mill structures. This area contains a myriad of wildlife, together with several lakes. In addition to the wood storks, there are many other birds (including, for example, roseate spoonbills during our warm months) in addition to various other animals and vegetation. The pending re-zoning application contains a much ballyhooed provision for a “Conservation Area.” You should note that the proposed “Conservation Area” is only 18 acres (vs. 521 acres of industrial area), is limited to the wood stork nesting area, and is committed to conservation only “as long as wood storks are present on the property” (a possible temptation to drive the wood storks off the property!). It would be hoped that, if this re-zoning application is approved, it would be conditioned upon a “Conservation Area” much in excess of 18 acres, benefiting all wildlife, and be permanent rather than limited to wood stork nesting.
- According to some published reports, the present re-zoning applicants have a questionable track record, with indications of criminal involvement (for example, see http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2007/09/exchief_island_port_has_plan_f.html). I strongly suggest that St. Marys is inviting embarrassment and ridicule if it accommodates these people.
- The recent Final Report of the Downtown Visioning Steering Committee (submitted to the City Council last week, with copies to us as DDA members) is an excellent piece of

work, obviously the product of many hours of hard effort by this ten-member volunteer committee. It contains two visions, the first relating to St. Marys Street and the downtown waterfront; and the second relating to Osborne Street becoming "an attractive, inviting, welcoming entrance to the Historic District". The stated objective of this vision is to "Enhance the visual appearance of Osborne Street beginning at the Railroad." Please note that this committee was not involved with any aspect of the mill site re-zoning, and I am not suggesting that it has any position either for or against the proposed re-zoning. However, I submit that the proposed mill site industrial re-zoning, especially with its potential for truck traffic utilizing Meeting Street, could significantly impede the accomplishment of the Osborne Street vision expressed by the Downtown Visioning Steering Committee.

I am thankful and proud that, over the years, our St. Marys-area has successfully resisted pressures for development such as high rise condominiums and Hilton Head-type development of Cumberland Island, even though, almost surely, such would have resulted in jobs and an expanded property tax base. We have regarded that as a price worth paying to maintain the charm, beauty, life style, and peace of our beloved City. I urgently hope that you will agree that the mill site industrial zoning proposal should be rejected as being a similar encroachment upon this charm, beauty, life style, and peace.

As I understand the applicable parliamentary situation, if there is to be a reconsideration, such must be requested by a person who voted on the prevailing side. It is my sincere hope that those of you who voted for DDA's support of this proposed industrial zoning will consider such reconsideration.

Thank you. Respectfully, Bill Bruce